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AUTHOR	Cuttance, Peter
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ABSTRACT

This paper provides information about the development of a successful quality-assurance process in the New South Wales, Australia, school system. In 1992 the New South Wales (NSW) government announced its commitment to a program of quality-assurance reviews of schools. During that year, approximately 100 meetings were held with principals, school staff, parents, and other key groups to elicit feedback and introduce the new program. This paper summarizes the key issues discussed at the meetings. The quality-assurance review of schools will take place during the first three terms of 1993. The process will involve schools working with review teams to determine the best way to conduct the reviews. The paper defines quality-assurance reviews and provides a brief historical overview of quality assurance in the NSW Department of School Education, a summary of research and literature related to school review and development, and answers to commonly asked questions about quality assurance. It also describes future directions of the program for the rest of 1993. (LMI)

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ED 384 141

THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS IN THE NSW PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: WHAT WORKS?

An information and discussion paper provided as input into the consultation and development process for quality assurance reviews.

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Peter Cuttance
Assistant Director–General
(Quality Assurance)

NSW Department of School Education

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS IN THE NSW PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: WHAT WORKS?

How You Might Use This Paper

If you want

- a succinct definition of quality assurance reviews?
- a brief historical comment on quality assurance in the NSW Department of School Education?

Then turn to page 1

If you want

- an overview of research and literature as it applies to review and development in schooling?

Then turn to pages 1–9

If you want

- the questions that are commonly asked about quality assurance by schools and their communities?
- answers to those questions?

Then turn to page 9–15

If you want

- some idea of where quality assurance is heading in NSW over the remainder of 1993?

Then turn to page 15

Introduction

> Quality assurance reviews assess the effectiveness of practices and processes for achieving improved student outcomes in school systems. They contribute to the process through which schools as *learning organisations* develop a planned approach to *constructing* their future. Quality assurance reviews focus on the accountability and development of schools and the program support and services provided to them.

During 1992 the Government announced its commitment to a program of quality assurance reviews of schools and the services and programs provided to schools. During the last two terms of 1992 about 100 meetings were held with principals, other school staff, parent groups and peak bodies with a direct interest in the quality of schooling. This paper brings together the key issues discussed by these groups. What it has to say draws on an assessment of what has worked well in other systems. However, this has been significantly tempered by discussions of the context of schooling in this state. A small number of trial reviews based on the approaches outlined in this paper have been held by schools working with quality assurance teams in term 1. The paper now provides this information to a wider audience to facilitate further discussion of the issues as part of the consultative process and collaborative development necessary in introducing a system of quality assurance for NSW public schools.

The development of quality assurance reviews of schools is being undertaken during terms 1–3 of 1993. This process will involve schools working with review teams to ascertain the best ways to conduct such reviews to achieve the joint objectives of contributing to public accountability and making a constructive contribution to the development of individual schools.

Quality Assurance in Schooling

Quality assurance brings together two distinct aspects of work in education systems: school development and accountability, which means that it is a fundamental part of the core function for which each of us is responsible. All members of staff in the school system are accountable for the effectiveness of their own contribution to student learning outcomes. Clearly, this also means

that each or us has a primary responsibility for the development of schools, through the improvement of our own work.

All groups within a school community can contribute significantly to school development. School staff, of course, are the prime movers in all school development. Staff outside of schools who have key responsibilities to contribute directly to school development includes curriculum consultants, cluster directors, training and development consultants, and the quality assurance review teams will also have a role to play. Other staff in state and regional offices contribute directly and indirectly to school development through the provision of services and programs to schools.

Quality assurance is an integral part of all our work throughout the school system—building-in quality. *Building-in* quality is often contrasted with the alternative approach of *inspecting-out* inferior outcomes after they have been produced.

More than ninety percent of the quality assurance effort of the school system occurs as part of normal everyday operational activities, whether it is teaching a class or developing a new training module for staff in a state directorate. Quality assurance reviews conducted through the Quality Assurance Directorate use only a fraction of the total resources utilised for assuring quality throughout the school system. The quality assurance directorate has three functions:

- enabling quality assurance practices to become an integral part of the way schools and other parts of the system work,
- reviewing the effectiveness of quality assurance practices to assess whether they are achieving their aim of building quality in to all aspects of work throughout the school system, and
- reporting on the effectiveness of schools and of the programs and services supporting schools in their efforts to improve student outcomes.

The Quality Assurance Directorate will address these functions through a range of activities, including:

- the establishment of teams to work with school communities in reviewing the performance and development of their schools
- assessing and reporting on the effectiveness of the programs and support services provided to schools
- collaborating with a wide range of operational groups in the system to assist them to develop effective quality assurance practices
- reporting on systemwide issues affecting school development and performance to directors and managers responsible for the provision of services and programs to schools.

The reviews of schools will contribute to the overall accountability processes for schools and the reports to directors and managers will contribute directly to the accountability of a wide range of aspects of the system outside of schools.

Internal School Review for Development

The school effectiveness literature clearly indicates that effective schools engage in a constant process of internal review and planning.[1] This is, in fact, part of the quality assurance process and effective schools see this as an integral element of their approach to continuous development. Successful schemes of school–based review have the following main characteristics:[2]

- they are based on a systematic review and evaluation process, and are not simply an exercise in reflection
- their focus is to obtain information about a school's condition, purposes, and achievements
- they lead to action on aspects of the school's organisation or curriculum
- they are a group activity that involves participants in a collegial process
- the process and its outcomes are 'owned' by the school
- their purpose is school improvement and development, and their aspiration is to progress towards the goal of a 'problem solving' or 'relatively autonomous' school.

This list of characteristics has come from hindsight gained through the evaluation of school–based review schemes over the last decade or so. In reality, few schemes have conformed to these characteristics, partly because there has been considerable variation in purpose among the schemes.

The key evaluation issues for school reviews are: context (who are they for, and what are the objectives), process (how is the scheme put into practise), reporting (who reports, to whom, how are reports validated, how do they relate to parts of the system outside of schools), and action that should follow from the review (how is development for improved student outcomes managed).[3]

Questions about context

- What is the purpose of the review? Who is examining what and for whom?
- What balance is intended between school development and the provision of an account of the school's activities and outcomes?
- Who takes the initiative?
- Is the review mandatory?
- Who controls the review process?
- Does the communication and consultation about the review provide a clear understanding of the process and objectives to all involved?

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1 See for example, the literature reviews by Reynolds and Levine in Reynolds and Cuttance (eds), School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Practice. London: Cassell. (1992).

2 See David Hopkins, *Evaluation for School Development.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press. (1989).

3 Adapted from Desmond Nuttall, *School Self–Evaluation. Accountability With a Human Face?* London: Schools Council. (1981).

- Is the review threatening to schools, teachers or community groups?

Questions about process

- How are the terms of reference developed to ensure the ownership of the review by the school?
- Is the review economical in terms of time and resources?
- Who is to be involved, both inside and outside the school, and what is the nature of their involvement? How are students, school staff and parents involved in the review?
- What skills and other resources are available to the review?
- How is the integrity of the process to be ensured?
- What methods are employed to gather and analyse information?
- Over what period of time is the review conducted?
- How is the program of reviews sustained?
- How frequently do reviews occur?

Questions about reporting

- What are the ground rules for the report?
- Who drafts the report? Who authorises the final draft?
- Who receives the report? Is it a public report?
- What is the style of the report? Descriptive or judgemental, bland or blunt, what format, length, what tone, etc?
- Are individuals identified in the report?
- What part are the media expected to play, if any?

Questions about action

- Is implementation of the recommendations built in to the process?
- Are consultants and other support staff involved in the implementation of recommendations from the review?
- How will implementation be managed?
- Will implementation be a continuous part of a cyclical process of evaluation, planning, and action?

A major problem of school self–evaluation programs has been their failure to construct analytically critical reviews and evaluations of the process of schooling.[4] Evaluations have often tended to be defensive and often have not tackle critically issues central to the process of learning and teaching.[5] In addition, the development that should follow an evaluation was often not

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[4] See Hopkins, *op cit.* David Hargreaves, Assessment and performance indicators: the English experience. In A. Ruby and T. Wyatt (eds), *Indicators in Education.* Sydney: Australian Conference of Directors–General of Education (1988): Phil Clift, School–based review: A response from the UK perspective. In D. Hopkins (ed), *Improving The Quality of Schooling: Lessons from the OECD International School Improvement Project.* Lewes, East Sussex: Falmer Press. (1987).

[5] Hargreaves, *op cit.*

managed successfully, and has often not resulted in the intended improvements.[6]

There are various reasons for these problems. Successful change in social organisations through a process of review, development and evaluation requires a high level of complex management skills. It requires motivation[7] and access to training in skills of evaluation and the management of change.[8] The significant investment of time required for successful school development means that all the participants must have a strong commitment to the changes needed, and be prepared to divert time and energy from other activities into the various phases of the program.[9] The lack of experience in planned change and in managing the commitment and time required to redeploy resources have also been significant reasons in the past for the failure of school self–evaluation systems to lead to successful school development.[10]

Other problems of school–based reviews have been:

- they have rarely involved all stakeholders – their focus has often been that of professional development for school staff. For this and a variety of other reasons, pupils, parents, the community and administrators have not always been included in the review process
- they have tended to be too time consuming and demanding on those involved
- they have often attempted to be all encompassing and have tackled too large a task
- the review cycle has often been of the wrong type to make a continuous and significant impact on the development process in schools.[11]

In the systems where school self–evaluation has been implemented primarily as a means of establishing systemwide accountability it has failed in all but the most committed schools. It has been difficult in a school–based system of self–evaluation to obtain the information necessary to assess the performance of the system as a whole, and to develop and implement change strategies in the weaker schools. For these reasons there has been widespread recognition of the role of external review in systemwide accountability structures. In some systems these accountability structures have been established entirely external to schools, but in others they have been based on a combined internal–external review system.

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6 Hargreaves, *op cit.*
7 Clift, *op cit.*
8 Clift, *op cit*; Hopkins, *op cit.*
9 Hopkins, *op cit.*
10 Clift, *op cit.*
11 Typically such school–based reviews sought to establish a fixed–cycle process, such as a five year development plan followed by a review at the end of the period. It is now recognised that effective development must be based on a continuous cycle.

Forms of Accountability in School Systems

Accountability in school systems has three distinct forms.[12] First, there is the way in which schools are directly accountable to students and parents (moral accountability). Second, staff in schools are accountable to professional standards and norms (professional accountability). Third, schools are accountable to government (contractual accountability). In state education systems this latter aspect is part of the process by which governments are held accountable for the expenditure of public funds and the implementation of Government policy.

All three forms of accountability in school systems require that schools be able to provide an account of their activity and work for the relevant audiences. Moral accountability requires direct communication of these matters to parents and students. Professional accountability requires the provision of an account to the professional body responsible for standards and norms. Contractual accountability in government school systems requires that the Minister be able to provide information that gives an account of the performance and activity of individual schools and of the system as a whole.

Accountability in Practice

The involvement of school communities in the planning and development of individual schools enhances the ability of schools to provide an account of their performance to the community.

There are three main ways of providing for contractual accountability in school systems. First, some systems do this through processes that assess the degree of compliance by schools with specified regulations and requirements. Such an approach is integral to systems based on the accreditation of schools, that is, the provision of a 'licence' for the school to operate for a specified period. In Australian systems the accreditation process for non-government schools is of this type.

The second way of providing an account of schooling is to do so on the basis of monitoring student outcomes. Such systems may provide information to the public about the performance of individual schools in terms of student outcomes only. In some cases these systems take account of the prior learning of students before their entry to an individual school. This allows them to report on student *progress* in schools, as opposed to the simplified and distorted picture of the effectiveness of schools provided by information based only on the exit level of student attainment. Information on the performance of students is viewed in such systems as part of the 'consumer' information which parents use to choose between schools.

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[12] This section draws on the discussion of accountability in Maurice's Kogan's book *Education Accountability*, London: Hutchison. (1986).

A third way of providing accounts of the operation of individual schools is through the conduct of reviews to assess their effectiveness. These reviews typically use a participative and diagnostic methodology to provide feedback which is also of assistance to the further development of the school. In this case the timeframe covered by the account can encompass the future as well as the present. Such processes provide the opportunity to give an account of the school's plans for its development and the improvement of student outcomes.

Accountability systems based on effectiveness reviews provide support to the further development of schools, in addition to providing an account of their current activities.

The remainder of this paper focuses on key issues in developing a system of quality assurance reviews which contribute to the further development of each school reviewed and to accountability by indicating the current state of affairs of the school plus information about its plans for further development

Quality Assurance Reviews

The fundamental aim of quality assurance is to be able to answer the following question: How do we know that tomorrow's outcomes will be better than today's and yesterday's?

In order to focus a quality assurance review on the contribution that it can make to *school development* one might ask the following questions:

- How does this particular school go about the task of meeting the community's needs for education, in the context of addressing statewide priorities for student outcomes?
- What is this school on about? How relevant are the goals of the school to the education needs of the community?
- How does this school know it is achieving what it has set out to do? What are the school's achievements?
- How does this school respond to what it knows about its achievements?

The need to assure quality does not mean that there is something inherently wrong or deficient in the current operation of schools. Rather, it reflects the need to provide a clear framework for public accountability and to ensure that all parts of the department develop an approach to continuous improvement and development in providing learning opportunities for students.

This approach to quality assurance reviews provides the basis for them to make a constructive contribution to the development of individual schools. It also contributes to a framework for enabling schools to establish their own effective quality assurance practices. Reviews can do this through the establishment of teams of school–based staff who work consultatively with the

school community to identify and discuss current performance and areas for future development.

The fact that schools operate in a continuously changing world and that the demands upon them have increased substantially over the last few years means that it is important that effective development and planning practices are implemented in schools. Planning enables schools to be pro-active in their responses to their community's educational needs and to the changing external environment. Quality assurance reviews support this process by providing strategic evaluations of the current achievements and the state of affairs in individual schools within a context of how they are tackling development to improve student performance. The reviews support the role of the cluster director and other staff, such as consultants, in their role of working with schools to develop effective planning and improvement practices.

Quality assurance reviews in this perspective provide a public account of school development. That is, they satisfy the requirement of accountability to provide a statement of the current activities of schools, but they do this within a context of the future development of schools. Further, the accountability process is not only outcomes orientated, but both development and outcomes orientated.

The effective development of schools to improve student outcomes requires:

- a clear and shared vision of the learning outcomes that students are to achieve in the particular school
- a means for translating this vision into a strategic development plan for the school
- ownership of the vision and development plan by all stakeholders in the school community
- the development of effective teaching practices which focus on achieving continuous improvement in learning outcomes for students
- identification of the professional development requirements for staff to implement the school's development program
- structures and processes for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the strategies for school development, with provision for feedback to the implementation process itself
- a review and evaluation process which assesses progress in meeting planned objectives and takes stock of the requirements for further development in the school.

Quality assurance reviews will provide a basis to acknowledge clearly and publicly the achievements of individual schools and of the school system. They will also provide a strategic focus on 'best practice' for effective school development, particularly in relation to student learning. They will provide both formative and summative feedback to individual schools on their development, through a process of external review by leading practitioners from schools.

Further, they will provide information on practice in areas of school leadership and management, teaching and learning, and equity issues across the state. This will include information on a range of operational factors that enhance or impede the performance of schools. Such information will be directly relevant to the targeting of scarce resources and professional development programs across the system.

Finally, the reviews will monitor the effectiveness of program support and services provided to meet the needs and requirements of schools. The information gained from assessing the performance of programs and other services during school reviews will provide for the evaluation of the effectiveness of support to schools. This information will support accountability and decision making for the improvement of individual programs and services to schools.

Questions About Quality Assurance Reviews of Schools

What is the focus of quality assurance reviews?

The major focus of school reviews is the development plan for the individual school. This plan, developed collaboratively by the school community to meet local education needs within the context of statewide education priorities, forms the basic terms of reference for the review process. The statements of best practice in the system provided by the criteria discussed below will provide additional terms of reference—in the form of a general framework for reviews.

The review team will negotiate the primary focus areas for the review with the school. These will be agreed as the initial understanding of the key aspects of the current performance of the school and the most important factors in its continuing development. As the review develops, additional foci may emerge from the input of staff, students and parents. These will be either integrated into the previously agreed foci or addressed as a separate part of the review.

A further element of the focus of school reviews is the effectiveness of the support and services provided to schools by other parts of the department.

How do quality assurance reviews acknowledge the many every day achievements of schools?

Schools are often blamed for a range of social problems for which they have no direct responsibility, and over which they have no control. It is important, therefore, that school reviews provide direct information on the achievements for which schools do have responsibility. Reviews will gather this information

from the various parties involved in the school: typically through discussions and meetings with school staff, students, parents and other members of the local community.

How do the reviews impact on the quality of teaching for learning?

Reviews must focus on the practices and support structures required for student learning. This requires the establishment of statements of 'best practice' to which individual schools can be expected to aspire. In order for these statements to be realistic and applicable to this system, the most sensible way of going about constructing such statements is to draw them from the most effective experience and practice in the system. The knowledge and experience contained in systemic policy documents and in published research also provide relevant information for this exercise. This is a process best achieved by bringing together groups of key practitioners from schools.

These descriptions of best practice provide a common framework for school reviews. Individual schools will not be expected to meet all criteria in the descriptions of best practice but to move towards them over time. These descriptions will provide a common and agreed starting point for discussions between the review team and the school.

Periodic quality assurance reviews must be viewed as only part of the overall development process in schools. The best way to achieve continuous improvement is through a cycle of planning, development, monitoring progress and subsequent reshaping of strategies and directions. This cycle then becomes an integral part of the normal way that schools work. Quality assurance reviews will aim eventually to focus on the effectiveness of this development and review cycle itself.

What is the time frame for quality assurance reviews?

Research on the support that quality assurance reviews can provide to school development indicates that the appropriate cycle is three to four years. These reviews normally take from three to five days in a school, depending on its size. Reviews of very small schools, however, would take perhaps only one or two days, depending on the size of the review team. Quality assurance teams will negotiate the specific week for each review a term ahead of the scheduled review date.

How do schools arrange their participation in the review process?

Ideally, the review process is integrated into the development process of individual schools. For the review to provide maximum benefit to a school it should be programmed to occur at the time most appropriate for the school. In this way the focus of the review can be integrated into the overall framework of monitoring and evaluation practices that the school undertakes to ensure its development.

Obviously, constraints exist in terms of the resources available at any particular time, but it should be possible for the review teams to work with schools at a time in the monitoring and evaluation cycle when they can make a significant contribution to the ongoing development of schools.

In the early phase of the introduction of quality assurance reviews it will be necessary to work with a range of schools to develop the review process. It is important that this development work involves a broad spectrum of schools so that the methodology is responsive to the full range of potential issues in reviews.

How do the reviews take account of the circumstances of individual schools?

It is important that all reviews take as their starting point the current circumstances and situation of the school being reviewed. Taking account of the unique circumstances of an individual school includes taking on board information about the attainment of students in the school and taking account of the type of community that the school serves—its socio-economic composition, its ethnic composition, and the language backgrounds of students and parents in the community. Further, information on the staffing profile of the school and on pertinent aspects of recruitment of staff, information on the physical environment of the school, etc, must also be taken on board in shaping the focus of the review.

What is the membership of school review teams?

The team requires a review leader or manager, who is responsible for setting up the review, managing it during the period in the school and producing the report from the process. The school principal will be involved throughout the review. It is also important to have the school principal join the review team as a member who undertakes most, but not necessarily all, of the functions of other members of the review team. Generally, principals prefer not to engage in the information gathering exercise within their own school, but to be involved in all of the other activities of the review team. For public accountability purposes it is important that the review team contain members from other schools. Typically, this means a peer principal/executive from

another school, and up to two staff from other schools. In addition, it is important that the review team contain one or two parents or other members of the local community.

Do quality assurance reviews require schools to do a lot of additional work?

The maximum impact of the review process on school development will occur when the role of the review is integrated into the ongoing monitoring and evaluation cycle of the school. It follows that schools should not prepare information for the review that is not essential to their further development. When quality assurance review processes are first introduced, schools often seek to prepare for them by undertaking unnecessary additional work, but this usually dissipates once schools become more comfortable and familiar with the process. It is appropriate that the review findings and recommendations are based on the normal everyday activities of the school.

How do review teams go about their work and who is involved?

Review teams need to gather their information through structured meetings and interviews with a cross-section of pupils, school staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and parents in the local community. Processes of random selection can be used to ensure that a cross-section of each of these groups is involved in the review. However, for public credibility the process also has to be open. Therefore, it must provide an opportunity for anyone else who wishes to meet with the review team to do so. Review teams normally undertake observation throughout the school, whether in classrooms or in other areas of the school, in relation to the agreed focus areas for the review. The team will also peruse working documents and, where appropriate, may conduct small scale surveys.

How are quality assurance reports presented?

Quality assurance reports contain key elements that are seen as critical to all reports. It is important that reports cover the context of the school, including information about the community and student outcomes and that they clearly indicate the achievements of the school. Further, they should discuss the effectiveness and progress of the school in terms of its development to improve student outcomes. In so doing, the report should focus as much as possible on the organisation and management of the school, particularly as it impacts on the delivery and support for the curriculum, teaching and learning.

By taking account of both the characteristics of the school community and of the outcomes for students, the report can present the real rather than the apparent performance of the school. In this process, information on student

outcomes is an important input to the review process – it assists in shaping the focus of the review, and provides information on progress by contextualising the attainments of students.

It is also important that reports comment on issues related to equity in the school. They should not only state the findings from a review, but bring these together in a strategically oriented set of recommendations for the further development of the school. Since reports aim to make a significant contribution to school development, it is important that they directly address those who are responsible for carrying through with that development - particularly principals and other staff. It is also important that further dissemination of the findings of reviews to the school community takes place.

What is the intended audience for review reports?

It is important that school reports are public documents. It is necessary for the reporting process to be public if there is to be confidence in the overall review process. Further, all parties that make a contribution to the review have a moral right of access to the report.

School communities may be apprehensive about the prospect of public reports. Experience suggests, however, that reports produced from an open review process are not misused, provided they are written deliberately to provide a clear statement of the current state of affairs and make a contribution to the development of the school within the context of its current plans for development. In this way reports satisfy the requirement to provide a public account of the affairs and situation of individual schools whilst making an important contribution to their further development.

The dissemination of the findings of a review is the responsibility of the individual school. This is best achieved if the principal and community groups utilise the normal communication channels within the school community.

What, if any, is the link between quality assurance reviews and performance management reviews?

Quality assurance reviews are not part of the performance management process. The reviews focus on the overall performance of the school, not on the performance of individuals. The reports from school reviews do not refer to individual staff.

The school review process does not operate in a way that allows the information gathered to be used for performance management of school staff. In most cases there is no need to record from whom information is gathered or which classroom is observed.

What processes are appropriate for evaluating the effectiveness of the quality assurance function?

As in any organisation, it is important for the quality assurance function to monitor its own effectiveness so that it may continuously improve its performance. The quality assurance teams will develop processes to involve stakeholders in schools in the assessment of the effectiveness of review teams.

It is also important that a review of the function is conducted periodically. This review should ask whether or not the function is being carried out effectively. It should also ask whether the function should continue in its present form or if it would be more effective in its contribution to the development of schools and the provision of public accountability if it were to develop its activities in new directions. It should also question the continuing relevance of the purpose and parameters that guide the operation of quality assurance reviews.

The stakeholders in the quality assurance process—parents and communities, school staff, regional and state office staff, and others in the education enterprise—should all be involved in the evaluation of the quality assurance function.

What do school staff indicate are the advantages of quality assurance reviews?

School staff, parents and students who have previously been through quality assurance reviews have indicated that the process provided them with an important voice in the evaluation of their schools. They welcomed the opportunities to make a direct contribution to their school's further development. Teaching staff, in particular, have usually welcomed the opportunity to discuss with review teams the factors that are impeding and assisting the improvement of student outcomes in their schools.

Reports from school reviews indicate that at times schools approached the process with some trepidation. This has been contrasted quite sharply with the comments that are common at the end of a review when staff and principals have indicated how the process has helped them bring into clearer focus some of the emerging challenges they face. It has generally been found that staff and communities are positive about review recommendations.

Where review processes involve staff from other schools they provide a valuable opportunity for professional development through their involvement in assessing the factors responsible for development in the school under review. The learning opportunities that accompany such peer review processes have long been recognised as some of the most effective

professional development activities available in school systems. Staff who have been part of review teams support this notion.

What is the role of the cluster director in quality assurance?

Cluster directors play a fundamental role in the establishment of effective quality management practices throughout the school system. As key staff supporting schools in the development process, cluster directors will be involved in discussions about the review recommendations and will, with the principal and staff, work towards the implementation of action arising from the review report. For accountability reasons it is not intended that they will be members of review teams in schools within their own cluster. As with all other members of the broader school community, they will have access to the review process and are invited to make a contribution to the information considered by the team in light of the review focus areas agreed with the school.

What happens if school staff are not happy with a review or the behaviour of a member of a review team?

It is important that effective processes for handling any concerns that might arise are developed prior to the start of a review. Careful pre-review planning and negotiation with the school should eliminate most potential areas of concern.

The school principal, as a member of the team, is an obvious point of contact between staff and the team, however, it is also important that an alternative option is provided. As part of the review planning process it is usually good practice for the staff to elect one of their members to act as a liaison between the review team and staff, students and community members who have an interest in the review. It is important that any concerns or issues that arise are dealt with immediately during the review, therefore a process should be established for the review leader and the liaison person to meet periodically throughout the review.

Discussion

This paper has canvassed a range of issues related to effective school development and the way in which quality assurance review processes can make a significant and constructive contribution to development and accountability.

The purpose of the paper has been to assist the development of a successful quality assurance process in our school system. It has provided information from research on some of the successful practices in other

systems from which we might learn. These issues will be the subject of discussion as the quality assurance process is developed over the next two terms or so through continued consultation and work undertaken jointly with schools to develop a system that is appropriate to our needs in this state.

The consultation and development process

Quality assurance teams commenced working with schools in term 1 this year. About 400 schools have already indicated that they wish to part of this process in 1993.

The review teams are working with schools to determine the best mode of operation to achieve the dual objectives of making a constructive contribution both to the accountability of schools and to their development. At this stage there are no templates or decisions made on the design of the system which will emerge from this development process.

From the start of term 2 the quality assurance directorate will establish consultative structures in every region to take advice on the development of the quality assurance reviews of schools, and the reviews of services and programs provided for schools. These consultative structures will involve all the key stakeholder groups and will be accessible to all involved in schooling.

Anyone who wishes to make an input to the consultative or development process will be encouraged to work through the regional structures to be established and through the developmental school reviews that will take place. However, we also welcome input from anyone by communication direct to the Quality Assurance Directorate.

Please send communications to: Peter Cuttance, Assistant Director–General (Quality Assurance), Department of School Education, Level 15, 55 Market Street, Sydney 2000. Fax (02) 561 8222.